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PALESTINE REFUGEE PROBLEM:

Settlement of Palestine Refugees:
The role of the American University
of Beirut.

The American University of Beirut has been a source of enlightenment for a large portion of the Middle East for about 80 years. It has supplied the region with a large number of its leaders and trained personnel in major professional fields - teaching, business, medicine, nursing, dentistry and government service. Its faculty is about 60% Arab and 40% American. The student body amounts to about 2,000, including the High School section. It is drawn mostly from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Palestine, with some students from Transjordan and a few from Saudi Arabia.

There is no doubt that the A. U. B. is in a position to play a very important role in the settlement of the refugees. The following is a tentative list of services it could render:

1. Enlist the support of its alumni; The headquarters of the Alumni Association is established on the campus. It is in direct contact with branch associations and with industrial alumni. It could issue appeals to them requesting various types of support for the program. The support could be financial, professional or moral.

2. Put the machinery and effort of its village welfare service organization totally behind the settlement program; This is a dynamic volunteer organization which has been functioning since 1932. It began in Lebanon, and has gradually spread into Syria, Palestine and Iraq. Its objective has been the uplift of village life among Arab farmers and peasants, utilizing for that purpose the services of mature students, teachers, doctors, nurses, agriculturists and others. The work carried on through village camps, where the volunteers live for definite periods and cooperate with neighboring village folk in the solution of such problems as illiteracy, seed selection, pest control, construction of latrines, child care, housing, medical care, etc. (Reference is made to an article on this organization published in Rural Sociology, Vol. 8,

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3. Function as a major training center for the refugees: The A. U. B. is capable of service in this respect both on a short-term and on a long-term basis.

a. Short-term recurrent training for a selected number of refugees:

(1) Public Health at its excellent medical school.

(2) Practical nursing, child care and home welfare for mature girls and young mothers.

(3) Intensive agricultural courses of two weeks to one month for adult farmers, a service which has been rendered successfully for a number of years by the A. U. B. in cooperation with the Near East Foundation, through a joint organization called the Institute of Rural Life.

(4) Intensive courses in recreational leadership, as adapted to Arab village life.

b. Long-term training for a selected number of refugee boys and girls:

(1) Regular B. A. work, preparing for general leadership and for specialization in foreign universities.

(2) Specialized work in education, in preparation for village teaching.

(3) Business administration.

(4) Medical work and nursing.

(5) Agricultural training in the two-year course which is now offered at the university.

4. Engage in basic research for the benefit of the settlement project: There will be a great need for basic direct research in order to meet problems which are already existing or which will arise later. A.U.B. scientists in the fields of biology, chemistry,

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economics, sociology, history, education and others are in a position to help in this respect.

For the most part, the university is at present equipped to render the above mentioned services. It will need some financial assistance from the settlement project in order to expand its facilities and engage additional personnel.

If, however, a major long-range program is contemplated, involving developmental projects for the countries receiving the refugees, the possibility of aiding the A. U. B. to expand to a much greater extent must be considered. On the foundations that have already been established, a complete college of agriculture could be added. With the exception of Egypt, none of the Arab countries have such an institution, despite the fact that their economies and way of life are predominently agricultural. Moreover, a school of industrial chemistry, badly needed in the area, could be developed. The studies of rural sociology and agricultural economics could be strengthened for the benefit of the region as a whole.

The A. U. B. is a non-political, non-sectarian Arab-American institution. It commands the loyalty of thousands of its alumni, many of whom are in leading technical, professional and political positions in various Arab countries. Unlike national colleges and universities of the area, it is not hampered by national boundaries and local politics; and unlike sectarian institutions, its services are not affected by religious restrictions. It belongs to all countries and to all religions of the Arab peoples, and it has the capacity for development into a great institution which could serve the best interests of both the Arab World and the United States.

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